

a voluntary payment or whatever we wind up calling it when Congress acts.

So anyway, I thank you for that. Secretary Glickman, would you like to say anything?

[Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman described his visits to Kentucky and efforts underway to deal with the situation and closed by saying that he was looking to economic development options rather than alternative crops programs as a significant part of the solution.]

The President. Let me just make one other request of all of you. I will certainly try to do what you've asked me to do; that is, I'm going to do my dead-level best to get the legislation passed this year that will not only dramatically reduce teen smoking, but will provide some certainty to you and some legitimate protection for the tobacco farmers and the warehouses and their communities. So I will try to do that.

But let me ask you to do something, because you've really piqued my interest here, both what our pastor said and what Marissa said, what you said, Bill, what you said, Mattie, about parents' responsibility. I have spent quite a bit of time with young people's groups, the youth organizations all over the country, from New York City to small towns in California, of young people who are organized to try to get their peers not to smoke and who also often go from store to store to test whether the sellers of cigarettes are actually even making modest efforts to do anything about it.

And I respect that because I think it's wrong to put all the responsibility here on the manufacturers. It's not like these children and their parents and their families and their schools and their churches are just ciphers that have no will, have no knowledge, have no nothing. I mean, they get up every day and go through life, too. And I wish you would get some thought to—as a practical matter, I don't know that the Government could offer every 18-year-old \$1,000 on their 18th birthday if they could prove they never smoked a cigarette, but there may be some other things we could do in the area of getting young people to assume more responsibility and providing some rewards and doing some things that we haven't thought

And Marissa, the other thing, we may not have been as creative about that whole element of this as we can be, and I'd be willing to think about that.

Ms. Vaught. There is a teacher who talked to me about this, and he said maybe college scholarships for nonsmokers, maybe a non-smoking scholarship for students who happen to do well in school and are non-smokers.

The President. We'll look at that. We'll figure out what the cost of that would be. You may be right; it may be cheaper than some of the other stuff we're doing. *[Laughter]* I'll do that, I'll look into that.

You were great all of you. Thank you very much. Let's give them a hand. Weren't they great? *[Applause]* Very impressive. Thanks.

NOTE: The discussion began at 11:08 a.m. at the Kentuckiana Warehouse. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Paul E. Patton and Lt. Gov. Stephen L. Henry of Kentucky; State Auditor Edward B. Hatchett, Jr., State Senator Larry Saunders, president, and State Senator Walter Blevins, Jr., president pro tempore, Kentucky Senate; State Representative Jody Richards, speaker, Kentucky House of Representatives; Judge Gene McMurtry, Carroll County; Mayor Bill Welty of Carrollton; and Melvin and Brett Lyons, owners, Kentuckiana Warehouse.

Remarks at Carroll County High School in Carrollton

April 9, 1998

Thank you very much. Now, Jackie was a little nervous before she came up, but I think she did a great job, don't you? *[Applause]* She mentioned your other two classmates, Marissa and Josh, who were over at the other meeting in the warehouse, and they were also very, very good, and you could have been very proud of them.

I could have done without Jackie reminding me that Kentucky beat Arkansas not once, not twice, but 3 times this year. But I cheered for you anyway in the tournament. *[Laughter]*

And let me say, I'm delighted to be here with my good friends Governor Patton and Senator Ford, and I thank them for their leadership for you and for all of Kentucky.

I thank Secretary of Agriculture Dan Glickman for coming down here with me today, and for being here last week and for his tireless work for the farmers of America.

I thank Congressman Scotty Baesler for flying down here with me today and also bending my ear about the needs of farmers and the communities; and Lieutenant Governor Henry; your auditor, Edward Hatchett; Senator Saunders; Senator Blevins; Speaker Jody Richards and Mayor Welty, and Judge McCurry. I thank all of them for being here with me.

I thank your superintendent and your principal for welcoming me to your school. And I'd also like to thank the people, in addition to the students who were mentioned, who met with me over at the tobacco warehouse a few moments ago to discuss both this community's desire to prevent teenagers from smoking and to preserve the way of life for the tobacco farmers and their families. And I'd just like to acknowledge them—they're over here—Melvin Lyons, the owner of the Kentuckiana Tobacco Warehouse; Rod Kuegel, the president of the Burley Tobacco Growers Cooperative; Amy Barkley, the director of the Coalition for Health and Agricultural Development; Mattie Mack, a tobacco farmer who has raised 4 children and 38 foster children on her tobacco farm; Bill Sprague, the president of the Kentucky Farm Bureau; Dr. Wilbert Goatley, the pastor of the First Baptist Church of Eminence, Kentucky; and Marissa, Josh—you all stand up, all of you. Thank you very much for being here for us today. Thank you.

I'd also like to say a special word of appreciation to the vice chairman of Humana, David Jones, who was part of the Presidents' Summit on Citizen Service last April in Philadelphia and has committed \$2 million and 50,000 community service hours to help stop tobacco use by children. Thank you very much.

Ladies and gentlemen, before I get into my speech, I need to say a few words about the terrible losses suffered by our neighbors in Alabama and Georgia as a result of the tornadoes that swept through there last night. If you've been looking at the television, you've seen how awful it has been. Today I am declaring a major disaster in three Ala-

bama counties, Jefferson, St. Clair, and Tuscaloosa; adding to the number of counties already declared in the State of Georgia; and ordering more Federal aid to those areas. I have spoken to our FEMA director, James Lee Witt, and I've asked Mr. Witt and our Vice President, Al Gore, to go down to Alabama and Georgia tomorrow to look at the damage.

But if you have been seeing it on television, it's quite amazing, and I hope you'll all say a prayer for those folks tonight and join with them in spirit as they begin to rebuild.

Speaking of rebuilding, it's good to see how you have recovered from the flood of '97, when Eagle Creek and the Kentucky River were spilling out all over this county. It's a great moment of resilience for Kentucky and a golden moment for our country. Communities all across America are thriving. We have the strongest economy in a generation, the lowest unemployment rate in 25 years, the lowest inflation in 30 years, the highest rate of homeownership in the entire history of America. We have the lowest crime rate in 24 years, and crime has gone down 5 years in a row for the first time since the 1950's, when even I was younger than most of you in this audience. We have the lowest welfare rolls in 27 years. Things are going in a good direction in this country.

We've tried to open the doors of college to all Americans. Now, all of you students, your families can get a \$1,500-a-year tax credit for the first 2 years of college tuition and tax credits for the junior and senior year, for graduate school, for adults who have to go back to school; a better student loan program; more work-study grants; more Pell grants.

I think it's really possible for us to say to every young person in America, for the first time in the history of this country if you will work hard and make your grades and you want to go to college, money should now not keep you from going. We have opened the doors of college to all Americans.

I understand that the chemical and steel industries here in Carroll County are booming and virtually guaranteeing jobs to students who are involved in your remarkable

work-study program and getting the essential math, science, and technical skills you need.

Today, as all of you know, I came here to talk about the urgent national need to deal with the problem of more and more of our young people beginning to smoke, even though it's illegal to sell cigarettes to minors in every State in the country, and to talk about how that could impact the future of tobacco—tobacco farmers and tobacco communities.

I know there has been a lot of discussion in this area and, indeed, all over Kentucky about what this tobacco legislation in Congress involves and where we are in the process. So today I came here, first, to listen to the concerns of the people that I introduced over there who were trying to speak in a way for all of you and, second, to tell you where I think we're going with this.

But let me begin by making three points. First, we have an historic opportunity to pass bipartisan legislation this year which both contains the elements necessary to reduce teen smoking in America and provides adequate protection for tobacco communities. And I'm going to do everything I can to put politics aside and pass legislation that will achieve that objective.

Second, the legislation we seek is not about politics or money or Senator Ford seeking revenge on the tobacco industry. I don't want to put the tobacco companies out of business. I do want to put them out of the business of selling cigarettes to teenagers.

Third, it is important not to abandon the tobacco farmers, the warehouses, the communities, who have not done anything wrong, who have not marketed cigarettes to teenagers, who have worked hard to grow and sell a legal crop and been good, honest, tax-paying citizens. I will not support any legislation in this area that does not contain adequate protection for your farmers and your communities.

You know, when the flood waters were rising out of control here, not only you but all of your fellow citizens all across America just took it as a given that we had a national responsibility to help you deal with the flood and its aftermath and get back to normal.

When the terrible earthquake hit California, and you saw pictures of our representa-

tives going to California to try to help those folks restore normal life and spending a lot of money to rebuild their highways and rebuild one great university out there, I'll bet you hardly anybody in Kentucky resented the fact that the National Government was helping them.

When the Mississippi River overflowed its banks a few years ago and we had a 500-year flood, most people in Kentucky, I bet anything, did not object to the work we did to try to help the people in Iowa and Missouri.

Last year, when that town in North Dakota, that beautiful little town, was both flooded and burned at the same time, I bet all of us were pulling for the mayor up there and the citizens and glad to help.

When we have big economic upheavals, we must do the same thing. So if we succeed in reducing—here's the bottom line—if we succeed in reducing teen smoking, then sooner or later we will reduce the overall demand for tobacco. Can we do that and still do right by the families who grow tobacco, by the warehouses, by the communities? I think the answer to that is yes. And that's what the legislation has to do, so let me describe it—because otherwise, you can't say, "Oh, I'm for reducing teen smoking, but I don't want you to do anything about it."

By definition, if you reduce teen smoking, the volume will go down. Let's not pretend, just because I'm in Kentucky, that this is an easy problem. There's no point in pretending something is true that isn't. If you reduce teenage smoking, as is the right thing to do morally and from a health point of view and the law requires, it will reduce, sooner or later, the overall volume of tobacco required. How can you do that and be fair to the tobacco farmers and their communities? That is the issue here.

Now, I think we can do it. But first of all, you have to decide if you think it's important. Everybody says it, but do you believe that? Just last week, the Center for Disease Control in Atlanta released a disturbing report that found that more than 40 percent of American teenagers now smoke or chew tobacco. Now, the law says that tobacco companies can't advertise tobacco products on television or radio, but the ads are everywhere

else, in magazines, sport arenas, billboards, toy race cars, something not many adults buy. Not long ago, a national survey showed more young children recognized Joe Camel than Mickey Mouse. Today and every day, about 3,000 young people begin to smoke, and the evidence is conclusive that 1,000 of the 3,000 will have their lives shortened as a result.

Now, one of the things that has poisoned the political atmosphere is that the tobacco companies—nobody has any animosity against the farmers—but for years and years and years, the companies denied that they were marketing to children until all these lawsuits were filed and the information was drug out. And now every month, there's a new set of information which shows that not only were they knowingly advertising in a way that was especially appealing to children but that there were direct-marketing campaigns designed to get people involved before they were 18 to keep the number of cigarette smokers high. Now, that has come out. It wasn't volunteered; it wasn't told; it's been pulled out. And that has created this climate that exists in Washington and has resulted in all these lawsuits being filed.

What I want to do is to say, look, what's past is past, but what we want to do is to do all the things necessary to stop advertising and marketing tobacco to kids; to do things that will actually reduce teen smoking so more of you will live longer, better, healthier lives; and to do it in a way that protects the tobacco farmers and the communities—and again I say, doesn't put the tobacco companies out of business, just gets them out of the business of selling to children.

Now, last week, a key Senate committee on which Senator Ford sits approved by 19 to 1 a bill sponsored by John McCain, a Republican, and Senator Fritz Hollings of South Carolina, a Democrat, that we believe would cut teen smoking by half over the next decade. And thanks to Senator Ford's leadership, it contained provisions which will do what I said we have to do and also protects tobacco farmers and their communities. It recognizes that a lot of what people have been saying to tobacco farmers for years is just unrealistic, "Well, why don't you just go grow some other crop on the land?" There is no other crop that has anything like the

same return per acre that tobacco does, and most tobacco farmers have small plots of tobacco, earning quite a high yield per acre.

What does it do? It offers, first of all, a very generous buyout for people that want to stop producing now—very generous—so that they can have more than enough money to spend the investment doing something else to generate income.

Secondly, it says that if, over time, there is further reduction in demand, it provides more funds to help warehouses, communities, and provide very generous education benefits to people who are involved in the work.

And the third thing it does is to preserve the existing program for people who stay in it so that there will finally be some certainty instead of all the uncertainty that's been hanging over the families and communities like this one for so many years. The president of your State farm bureau said the most important thing we need now is to have legislation passed this year that will reduce teen smoking but will give these farmers and their families and their communities some certainty. That is what we want to do.

Yesterday, for whatever reasons, some of the tobacco executives indicated that they might not participate anymore in negotiating this bill, either because they think the bill that passed out of the Senate committee was too hard or because they're afraid it'll get worse. I don't know exactly what. I will say this, we have to have some financial incentives on them to in fact reduce the rate of teen smoking; otherwise we will have done all this for nothing. I'm not just trying to raise a bunch of money to raise money or to raise the price of cigarettes. The goal is to make America's children healthier.

And so I hope they will reconsider, because I'm determined to get this done this year. I heard today that the people here in this county do not want any more uncertainty. They want us to act. It would be better if we could act with the tobacco companies at the table too, so we're all talking together, so we're all sharing our information, so we all at least agree on the facts if we don't agree on the solutions. So I hope they'll reconsider and become a part of this. But we're going

to do this, this year. If I can control the outcome, we will actually act this year.

I don't think this is a time for threats by anybody. This is a time to put the past behind us, look ahead to the future, and achieve all these objectives. If we move forward with the legislation in the Senate and it does what it's supposed to do, it will stop about 60,000 children a year in Kentucky from beginning to use tobacco over the next 5 years. That means that 20,000 children a year in this State will live longer, healthier, fuller lives. I think that's worth the effort.

Let me also say, Mattie Mack, the farmer I mentioned who raised her own children and 38 foster children, gave me a pretty good little lecture about the responsibility of the people who buy or receive tobacco products and their parents and that we shouldn't put all this on the sellers. And so I say to all of you students, I hope that you are taking responsibility for your own future, and if you haven't started smoking, I hope you won't. I don't believe that the Wildcats could have left all of their opponents gasping for breath, could have come from behind repeatedly to win the tournament, if their lungs had been incapacitated. And I don't think you do either.

Again, I want to encourage you also to work with each other. I have a young friend here who's from another community in Kentucky who has become a pen-pal of mine. Her name is Meghan Johnson. Stand up, Meghan. She's a seventh grader from Madison County, Kentucky. And she's been writing me very interesting letters for the last few years. And so now, when one of Meghan's letters comes in, everybody in the office clamors to read it because she always says something rather unconventional and interesting. Like so many of you, in her youth she is brutally honest about whatever it is she's writing about.

She's taken a big stand against tobacco in her community. After seeing two people close to her stricken with cancer, she and some of her friends decided to produce a video and a poster to help convince every student in her middle school—understand the dangers of smoking.

And Meghan and all of you young people here today are the future of your State and

our Nation. If you want to do this and do it right, we can do it. We don't have to wreck the fabric of life in your community. We don't have to rob honest people of their way of life. But even in tobacco country, we can't deny what the scientists have told us or what has been done to market tobacco to children in ways that compromise their future. To me, no company's bottom line is important compared to America's bottom line. America's bottom line should be your life, your future, your health. And for me, that's what it is.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:14 p.m. in the gymnasium. In his remarks, he referred to Carroll County High School students Jacqueline Jones, who introduced the President, Marissa Vaught, and Josh Coombs; and Judge Gene McMurry, Carroll County.

Remarks Honoring the NCAA Football Champion Michigan Wolverines and the Nebraska Cornhuskers

April 9, 1998

The President. Welcome. We've had a lot of heavyweights in this room in the past but nothing to compare with this today. [*Laughter*]

Coach Osborne, Coach Carr, President Bollinger, Chancellor Moeser, Congressman Levin, Congressman Dingell, Congressman Upton. And I can't help noting today the presence of my National Economic Adviser, Gene Sperling, an alumnus of the University of Michigan. The only time he ever stops work is when Michigan plays football. [*Laughter*]

I am honored to have all of you here to celebrate the remarkable seasons of two great football teams from two great universities. For the entire season, everybody in America, especially in the last month or so, wanted Michigan and Nebraska to meet. I'm the only person who could pull it off. [*Laughter*] Since the sun is out, we ought to just go outside and settle the whole thing. [*Laughter*] We'll call it the Rose Garden Bowl. [*Laughter*]

In alphabetical order, we'll start with Michigan. All of America was awed by your